

Regional Transportation, Ecosystem, and Land Use Integration Plan

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Illinois, Total Cost: \$218,954, FHWA Share: \$109,477

Period of Performance: 24 months, Dates: April 4, 2008 – April 3, 2010

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Project Goals

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) is developing an integrated planning document. This document, known as the “*Eco-Logical* plan,” will serve as a comprehensive guide to land use, transportation, ecosystems, and infrastructure in the Peoria, Illinois, region. The plan will establish regional priorities for infrastructure development and assist local stakeholders in making development decisions.

Project Activities

The TCRPC project team is currently writing the final draft of its *Eco-Logical* plan. After completion of this plan in early 2010, the project team will conduct outreach to regional stakeholders. The outreach will focus on relevant policy concepts and technical implementation strategies.

Key Accomplishments

When the TCRPC project team examined regional environmental, land use, and infrastructure plans, it found that current and projected residential growth in the Peoria region overlaps with environmentally sensitive areas. Based on its analysis of existing regional plans and discussions with local government officials, the project team identified five key themes (agricultural preservation, balanced growth, economic development, environmental stewardship, and public infrastructure) that recognize the region’s priorities for sustainable growth and infrastructure and created related guidelines. TCRPC worked to incorporate these themes into the region’s recent update of its LRTP to be adopted in January 2010. The TCRPC project team has also worked with the three counties, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford, in the Peoria region to adopt County Comprehensive Plans that formalize the work done in this grant project. One of the counties has officially adopted its comprehensive plan, and the other two counties will adopt their plans in early 2010.

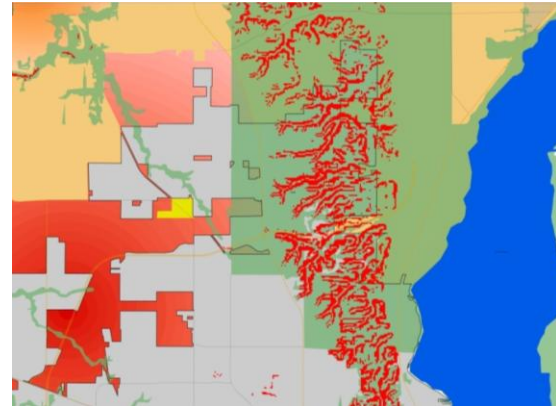


Figure: Demonstration of plan integration for the North Peoria area.

Challenges

TCRPC has faced a key challenge in the past year: control over transportation, land use, and environmental planning at the regional government level in the Peoria region is spread among 46 general purpose units of government. Local jurisdictions that govern planning and implementation in the region appear to be resistant to “green” concepts and are willing to accept negative environmental impacts in exchange for economic growth. This attitude stems from a long history of recessions and economic challenges that have occurred in the past and currently face the region. Throughout the project, TCRPC staff focused on emphasizing shared transportation goals among TCRPC, local transportation agencies, and local governments. This cooperative approach enabled TCRPC to make some progress towards overcoming these challenges.

Future Steps

Moving forward, TCRPC plans to use its *Eco-Logical* plan to analyze projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and to continue to work with local governments to design sustainable projects that align with the *Eco-Logical* plan. TCRPC also plans to use watershed data to identify potential mitigation opportunities and then make these data available to State and local agencies. TCRPC noted that the priorities outlined in its plan will allow it to use infrastructure as a tool to achieve future regional goals, such as sustainable growth and environmental protection.